



Jon Dee Graham **"Hooray For The Moon"** New West Records

Graham's gruff, throaty delivery somewhat mirrors that of Tom Wait's whose "Way Down In The Hole" is included in this, Jon Dee's third solo set. Raised in the Tex/Mex border town of Quemado, which located just south of Del Rio, Graham, cut his performing teeth with The Skunks, a band he joined in Austin, Texas during the punk explosion of late seventies. For the early part of the following decade Graham was a member of that seminal rock/roots quintet The True Believers [which included Alejandro Escovedo], following which he spent a decade in Los Angeles working with Ryan Hedgecock [ex Lone Justice] and joined John Doe's band. Relocating to Austin in the nineties he worked extensively with Calvin Russell in Europe for a couple of years and then joined Kelly Willis' road band. Based on the influences absorbed while living *on the border*, in Austin and on the West Coast, Graham's credentials amount to equal measures of rock, punk and roots music.

Graham made his solo debut on Austin's Freedom Records in 1997 with **"Escape From Monster Island"** and returned a couple of years later on New West with **"Summerland."** Jon Dee had already enjoyed substantial success with his songs. Patty Smyth covered his "One Moment," a song dating from the True Believer days, on her 1992 self-titled, gold selling album. Kris McKay, formerly of Michael Hall's Austin punk band The Wild Seeds, opened her solo debut **"What Love Endures"** [1990] with the song, and Jon Dee does the same on this collection. Produced by Don Smith, who has worked in the past with The Rolling Stones and Tom Petty it's hardly surprising, when considering Graham's pedigree, that the contents of this disc lean heavily toward the harder edges of roots rock. Little Joe [Hernandez], a fixture on Austin's Tex/Mex scene shares the vocal with Jon Dee on the tejano standard "Volver," while the bottleneck guitar, snare drum and sustained echo on "Waiting For A Sign" recalls those Brit posters The Beatles at their best. The lyrics to the latter cut consist of little else than the song title, so if you seek the *poetically complex and thoughtful* this may not be the disc for you. On the other hand, if you seek stridently melodic roots music, merged with the occasional slow burning ballad, like the sentimental closer "Tamale House #1," then **"Hooray For The Moon"** may just be the vessel from which to quaff Graham's brand of rhythmic and lyrical enlightenment.

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

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